

Alas! quod he, O Chauntecleer, alas!  
I have to yow, quod he, ydoon trespass,  
Inasmuche as I made yow aferd,  
Whan I yow hente, & broght out of the yerd;  
But, sire, I dide it of no wikke entente;  
Com down, and I shal telle yow what I mente;  
I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so!  
Nay thanne, quod he, I shrewe us bothe two,  
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,

If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.  
Thou shalt namoore, thurgh thy flaterye,  
Do me to synge, and wynke with myn eye;  
for he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,  
Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!  
Nay, quod the fox, but God yewe hym meschaunce,  
That is so undiscreet of governaunce,  
That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees.

**L**O, swich it is for to be reccheles,  
And negligent, and truste on flaterye.  
But ye that holden this tale a folye,  
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,  
Taketh the moralite, goode men;  
for Seint Paul seith, that al that writen is,  
To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis.  
Taketh the fruyt and lat the chaf be stille.

#### HEERE FOLWETH THE PHISICIENS TALE

**T**HER was, as telleth  
Titus Livius,  
A knyght that called  
was Virginius,  
Fulfil of honour & of  
worthynesse,  
And strong of freendes  
and of greet richesse.  
This knyght a doghter  
hadde by his wyf,

No children hadde he mo in al his lyf.  
fair was this mayde in excellent beautee  
Aboven every wight that man may see;  
for Nature hath with sovereyn diligence  
Yformed hire in so greet excellence,  
As though she wolde seyn, Lo, I, Nature,  
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature  
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?  
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,  
Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel seyn  
Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn,  
Outher to grave, or peynte, or forge, or bete,  
If they presumed me to countrefete.  
for he that is the former principal  
hath made me his vicair; general  
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis  
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is  
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe,  
And for my werk right nothyng wol I axe;  
My lord and I been ful of oon accord;  
I made hire to the worship of my lord.  
So do I alle myne othere creatures,

Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,  
As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,  
And brynge us to his heighe blisse. Amen.  
Heere is ended the Nonnes Preestes Tale.

#### Words of the Host to the Nonnes Priest

**I**RE Nonnes Priest,  
oure hooste seide anon,  
Iblessed be thy breche,  
and every stoon!  
This was a murie tale of  
Chauntecleer;  
But, by my trouthe, if  
thou were secular,  
Thou woldest ben a  
trede foul aright;

for if thou have corage, as thou hast might,  
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,  
Ya, mo than sevene tymes seventene!  
Se, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,  
So gret a nekke, and swich a large breest!  
He loketh as a sparhawk with his eyen;  
him nedeth nat his colour for to dyen  
With brasile, ne with greyn of Portyngale,  
Now, sire, faire falle yow for youre tale.  
And after that, he with ful merie chere  
Seide to another as ye shullen heere.

What colour that they han, or what figures,  
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.

**T**HIS mayde of age twelve yeer was and  
tweye,  
In which that Nature hadde swich  
delit;

for, right as she kan peynte a lilie whit,  
And reed a rose, right with swich peynture  
She peynted hath this noble creature  
Er she were born, upon hir lymes fre,  
Whereas by right swiche colours sholde be;  
And Phebus dyed bath hire treses grete  
Lyk to the streemes of his burned heete;  
And if that excellent was hire beautee,  
A thousand foold moore vertuous was she.  
In hire ne lakked no condicioun  
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.  
As wel in goost as body chast was she;  
for which she floured in virginitee  
With alle humylitee and abstinence,  
With alle temperaunce and pacience,  
With mesure eek of beryng and array.  
Discreet she was in answering alway,  
Though she were wise as Pallas, dar I seyn;  
hir facound eek, ful wommanly and pleyne;  
No countrefeted termes hadde she  
To seme wys; but after hir degree  
She spak, and alle hire wordes moore & lesse  
Sownynge in vertu and in gentillesse;  
Shamefast she was, in maydens shame-  
fastnesse,  
Constant in herte, and evere in bisynesse  
To dryve hire out of ydel slogardie.

Bacus hadde of hire mouth right no maistrie;  
for wyn and youthe dooth Venus encrease,  
As men in fyr wol casten oile or gresse.  
And of hir owene vertu unconstreyned,  
She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned,  
for that she wolde fleen the compaignye  
where likly was to tretten of folye,  
As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces,  
That been occasions of daliaunces.  
Swich thynges maken children for to be  
To soone rype and boold, as men may se,  
Which is ful perilous, and hath been yore,  
for al to soone may she lerne loore  
Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf.

**A**ND ye maistresses, in youre olde lyf,  
That lordes doghtres han in governaunce;  
Ne taketh of my wordes no displeaunce;  
Thenketh that ye been set in governynges  
Of lordes doghtres, only for two thynges;  
Outher for ye han kept youre honestee,  
Or elles ye han falle in freletee,  
And knowen wel ynough the olde daunce,  
And han forsaken fully swich meschaunce  
for everemo; therefore, for Cristes sake  
To teche hem vertu looke that ye ne slake.  
A theef of venysoun, that hath forlaft  
his likerousnesse, and al his olde craft,  
Kan kepe a forest best of any man;  
Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol, ye kan;  
Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,  
Lest ye be dampned for youre wikke entente;  
for who so dooth, a traitour is certeyn;  
And taketh kepe of that that I shal seyn;  
Of alle tresons, sovereyn pestilence  
Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence.

**E**fadres and ye moodres eek, also,  
Though ye han children, be it oon or two,  
Yours is the charge of al hir surveiaunce  
Whil that they been under youre governaunce;  
Beth war, that by ensample of youre lyvyng,  
Or by youre negligence in chastisyng,  
That they ne perisse; for I dar wel seye,  
If that they doon, ye shul it deere abeye.  
Under a sheperde softe and negligent  
The wolf hath many a sheepe and lamb torent.  
Suffiseth oon ensample now as heere,  
for I moot turne agayne to my matere.

**T**HIS mayde, of which I wol this tale  
expresse,  
So kepte hirself, hir neded no mais-  
tresse;  
for in hir lyvyng maydens myghten  
rede,

As in a book, every good word or dede  
That longeth to a mayden vertuous,  
She was so prudent and so bountevous;  
for which the fame outsprong on every syde,  
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde;  
That thurgh that land they preised hire echone  
That loved vertu, save Envy allone,  
That sory is of oother mennes wele,  
And glad is of his sorwe and his unheele.  
The doctour maketh this descripcioun.

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**T**his mayde upon a day wente in the toun  
Toward a temple, with hire mooder deere,  
As is of yonge maydens the manere.  
Now was ther thanne a justice in that toun,  
That governour was of that regioun,  
And so bifel, this juge his eyen caste  
Upon this mayde, avysynge hym ful faste  
As she cam forby ther this juge stood.  
Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,  
So was he caught with beautee of this mayde;  
And to hymself ful pryvely he sayde,  
This mayde shal be myn, for any man.  
Anon the feend into his herte ran,  
And taughte hym sodeynly, that he by slyghte  
The mayden to his purpos wyne myghte,  
for certes, by no force, ne by no meede,  
Hym thoughte, he was nat able for to speede;  
for she was strong of freendes, and eek she  
Confermed was in swich soverayn bountee,  
That wel he wiste he myghte hire nevere wynne  
As for to make hire with hir body synne;  
for which, by greet deliberacioun,  
He sente after a chert, was in the toun,  
Which that he knew for subtil and for boold.  
This juge unto this chert his tale hath toold  
In secree wise, and made hym to ensure  
He sholde telle it to no creature,  
And if he dide, he sholde lese his heed.  
Whan that assented was this cursed reed,  
Glad was this juge, and made him greet cheere,  
And yaf hym yiftes, preciouss and deere.

**W**HAN shapen was al hire conspiracie,  
fro point to point, how that his lecherie  
Parfourned sholde been ful subtilly,  
As ye shul heere it after openly,  
Hoom gooth the chert, that highte Claudius.  
This false juge that highte Apius,  
So was his name, for this is no fable,  
But knowen for historial thyng notable,  
The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute;  
This false juge gooth now faste aboute  
To hasten his delit al that he may.

And so bifel soone after, on a day,  
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,  
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,  
And yaf his doomes upon sondry cas.  
This false chert cam forth, a ful greet pas,  
And seyde, Lord, if that it be youre wille,  
As dooth me right upon this pitous bille,  
In which I pleyne upon Virginius;  
And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,  
I wol it preeve, and fynde good witnessse  
That sooth is that my bille wol expresse.

**T**he juge answerde, Of this, in his absence,  
I may nat yewe diffynytyve sentence;  
Lat do hym calle, and I wol gladly heere;  
Thou shalt have alle right, and no wrong heere.

**V**IRGINIAS cam to wite the juges wille;  
And right anon was rad this cursed bille;  
The sentence of it was as ye shul heere:  
To yow, my lord, sire Apius so deere,  
Sheweth youre povre servant Claudius,  
How that a knyght, called Virginius,

The  
Phisiciens  
Tale